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38TH CONGRESS, 1st Session. | SENATE. | Ex. Doc. No. 40.

MESSAGE

OF THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

An address of a committee of the "East Tennessee Relief Association" on the condition and wants of the people of East Tennessee, and recommending the construction of a railroad from Knoxville to Cincinnati, by way of central Kentucky, as a measure of relief to those people, and of military importance.

APRIL 28, 1864.—Read, ordered to lie on the table and be printed.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives:

I have the honor to transmit herewith an address to the President of the United States, and, through him, to both houses of Congress, on the condition and wants of the people of East Tennessee, and asking their attention to the necessity of some action on the part of the government for their relief, and which address is presented by a committee of an organization called "The East Tennessee Relief Association."

Deeply commiserating the condition of these most loyal and suffering people, I am unprepared to make any specific recommendation for their relief. The military is doing, and will continue to do, the best for them within its power. Their address represents that the construction of direct railroad communication between Knoxville and Cincinnati, by way of central Kentucky, would be of great consequence in the present emergency. It may be remembered that in the annual message of December, 1861, such railroad construction was recommended. I now add, that, with the hearty concurrence of Congress, I would yet be pleased to construct the road, both for the relief of these people and for its continuing military importance.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

APRIL 28, 1864.

To his Excellency ABRAHAM LINCOLN, *President of the United States:*

SIR: We have the honor to make known to your excellency that on the 6th instant, in this city, an association of loyal citizens was organized, entitled "The East Tennessee Relief Association." The objects of said association are definitely set forth in the second article of its constitution, which declares—

"The objects of this association shall be to contribute, as far as possible, to the relief of the people of East Tennessee, who are now suffering under the ef-

fects of a protracted war, by receiving and dispensing any donations or contributions, whether of moneys or supplies, that may be appropriated for that purpose by individuals, associations, or corporations; by aiding the people in every legitimate way in securing from the authorities, both civil and military, federal and State, proper protection in the resumption and prosecution of their industrial pursuits, and in obtaining from the government more speedy and satisfactory compensation for their property that may have been destroyed by authority or appropriated by the army as necessary for the public service; and, furthermore, it shall be the object of the association to encourage and support, by every means in its power, any and every project or enterprise calculated to open up to the people of East Tennessee the channels of communication with the markets of our more prosperous sister States."

By a resolution adopted by the said association on the 6th instant, the undersigned were appointed a committee in behalf of the association and the people of East Tennessee "to address the President of the United States, and, through him, both houses of Congress, on the condition and wants of the people of East Tennessee, and ask their attention to the necessity of some action on the part of the government for their relief."

In former times, and under ordinary circumstances, it would hardly have been deemed proper to address your excellency in this extraordinary way; but when it is considered that the people of Tennessee, by reason of the rebellion, are now without representation in either branch of Congress, and that they have no State legislature through which to communicate with Congress, we will be warranted, we trust, in approaching the government through your excellency in something like an original capacity. In attempting, therefore, the discharge of the duty imposed upon us by the association we represent, we feel that it is hardly necessary to recount to your excellency the painfully interesting history of the people of East Tennessee since the outbreak of the rebellion, though a brief recital of their wants and sufferings may not be out of place.

In the beginning of the pending civil strife East Tennessee, by an overwhelming majority, declared against the rebellion. From her geographical position, her railroad communications, her trade and social intercourse had been mainly with the southern States. Her domestic institutions and social organization were the same as theirs, or nearly assimilated thereto, and, according to the commonly received opinion, her future success and full development were identified with and dependent upon the growth and prosperity of the south. Nevertheless, when the scheme of corrupt and ambitious men to dismember the national government was fully disclosed, her people did not stop to consider their local or pecuniary interests. Their innate love of country rose above the narrow and selfish considerations that controlled the people and dictated the policy of other States. Appeals to local interests and sectional prejudices and hatreds were alike unheeded, and in her isolation from all the loyal States, and amidst the jeers and threatened violence of a southern mob, her people stood firm in their determination to maintain the federal Constitution and the Union of States existing under it. In the second and last election in Tennessee upon this question, on the 8th of June, 1861, out of an aggregate vote of about 48,000 in East Tennessee, only 14,700 votes were polled in favor of separation, and many of these were the illegal votes of rebel soldiers; and even after the pretended ordinance of separation had been passed and formally announced, the loyal people of East Tennessee, through a convention of their delegates at Greeneville, Tennessee, on the 20th of June, 1861, unanimously resolved, "that the action of our State legislature, in passing the so-called 'declaration of independence,' and in forming the 'military league with the Confederate States,' and in adopting other acts looking to a separation of the State of Tennessee from the government of the United States, is unconstitutional and illegal, and, therefore, not binding upon us as loyal citizens."

But the trusted leaders of the people in the middle and western divisions of the State at an early day yielded to southern clamor. The executive and legislature betrayed the trusts confided to them. Five millions of money were appropriated for the purpose of forcing Tennessee into the southern confederacy. Through the patronage and power thus acquired some men were bought, others intimidated. The press was muzzled, and free discussion suppressed, and by such means Tennessee, which less than four months before had given a majority of 60,000 in favor of the Union, was, through the mere form and mockery of a popular election, declared in a state of insurrection against the United States. Still loyal East Tennesseeans refused to acknowledge the validity of the act of separation. With unwavering devotion they still adhered to the "old government." Through the valley of East Tennessee ran one of the most important railroads in the confederacy, connecting the southwest with the capital of the rebel government. Geographically and strategically considered, this road was essential to the maintenance of the confederacy. The 35,000 Union voters inhabiting this section, mutually encouraging each other's patriotism, and strengthening a feeling of nationality in all, constituted a dangerous element in a very important locality. Prudence called for vigilance on the part of the rebel authorities, and malignity demanded revenge. Large armies were quartered among us. For more than two years the federal government was ejected from East Tennessee. Union citizens were disarmed, arrested without warrant, and, for alleged military offences, imprisoned at the pleasure of petty military tyrants, in violation of all law; forced to take oaths against their consciences, and in derogation of their allegiance to the United States; taxed with illegal costs, to support corrupt officials; their property seized for public and for individual uses; their fields were laid waste; in some instances houses were burned over the heads of families as punishment for their loyalty, and in other instances, *not a few*, men patriotically sealed their devotion to their country with their life-blood, either butchered by a lawless soldiery, or officially murdered by a military court.

Amidst this accumulation of wrongs and oppressions, being for the time hopelessly removed and cut off from the government to which they looked for protection, the people were unable, in their unarmed condition, to organize anything like an adequate resistance to the force always present among them. Smarting under these wrongs, they determined to be free. By small companies they gradually and stealthily withdrew from their cherished homes, leaving their property and families behind, sought the federal army in the neighboring State of Kentucky, organized into regiments, and claimed the high privilege of returning with the flag of their country to relieve their oppressed families and friends from the galling tyranny of confederate rule. While some eight or ten thousand East Tennesseeans, by means of conscription and other appliances were induced to enter the rebel service, at least fifteen to eighteen thousand loyalists, being one-half the loyal voting population, stole their way through rebel pickets and across the Cumberland mountains in search of that emblem of protection, the stars and stripes, to which they and their families still looked for relief.

This much we have deemed it proper to say in justice to our people, although the recital of their wrongs to your excellency may be but the repetition of an oft-told tale. Were this all, and did the suffering stop here, no murmur would now be heard to trouble the ear of government. But the patriotism of our people and the tyranny of the rebels have, naturally enough, co-operated to impoverish our country. Most of those who entered the armies, both federal and rebels, were laboring men, and thus more than half the ordinary labor of the country was withdrawn from the common industrial pursuits. The productions suffered a corresponding diminution, while the demand was increased by the pressing necessities of the rebel government. In the fall of 1861, for instance, East Tennessee furnished over 60,000 hogs to support the rebellion. In 1862

the rebel authorities were inexorable for further supplies. Every available hog was hunted out and taken. The products of our farms were seized wherever found. The stock to which we looked for future increase was destroyed without stint, and heavy drafts were made upon the citizens for clothing and blankets for the soldiery. The blockade of the southern coast, so disastrous to the confederacy, embraced us also in its ruinous effects, and deprived us of most of the comforts and necessaries of life to which we had been accustomed. In a word, we suffered all the ills of isolation, depopulation, and oppression. The hope of our people was, meanwhile, in the coming of the Union army. Finally, about the first of September of last year, that army came, but in its hurried and successful march across the mountains, over steep and rugged roads, it could not bring supplies a distance of one hundred and eighty miles from its depot of provisions. The advent of the Union troops was hailed with joy, and the broken and crushed spirits of Union men and women rallied with new life as they beheld the old flag coming once more to signalize the authority of the government of their fathers. But these troops found us with a reduced crop—the product of less than one-half the ordinary labor of the country, and much of that, too, produced by the labor of women and children whose tender hands had hitherto been unused to the sterner labors of the field. These troops required subsistence, and their necessities could not await the slow providence of commissaries and quartermasters. They must need take supplies wherever found; but the people, with hearts overflowing with gratitude for their deliverance, gave up their scanty stocks without seeming to count the cost, or consider the probabilities of payment. The country was regained, and, for a time, we had reason to believe that East Tennessee, from one extremity to the other, was about to be, if not already, restored to the authority and protection of the federal government, and that the native industry of our people, in conjunction with the opening of our communication with the northern markets, would soon restore us to a state of comparative comfort. But in this we were disappointed. Early in November the rebels, under Longstreet, numbering at least 25,000, entering lower East Tennessee, began their march upon Knoxville for the reconquest of the whole of East Tennessee. The quick and unerring eye of General Grant saw the advantages which this division of rebel forces gave to the federal army, and, accordingly, by instructions to General Burnside, who has carried with him to whatever field of labor he may be assigned the affection and gratitude of all loyal East Tennesseeans, the advance of Longstreet was facilitated. Knoxville was besieged. Soon afterwards the country, extending from Chattanooga to Knoxville, through which Longstreet came, was traversed by the Union forces under General Sherman, to the amount of 25,000 men, and the two armies necessarily exhausted and laid waste the country through which they passed. As the army of Sherman advanced, that of Longstreet withdrew, and it still sullenly holds its position not more than thirty miles distant, and occupying the country to within five miles of this place. The two armies, amounting to not less than fifty thousand men, with a very heavy proportion of cavalry, have drained and exhausted the whole of East Tennessee. Union men, upon the approach of the rebel army here, abandoned their homes, and the more prominent rebel citizens, for the most part, have deserted their possessions within our lines, and sought safety with their friends.

From what has been said, your excellency will see that we are reduced to almost the last extremity of suffering and want. That part of our labor not already in the army cannot now be profitably employed in the midst of hostile demonstrations. Our stock, including cattle, hogs, and sheep, is wellnigh gone; our horses have been taken by one government or the other, or stolen by stragglers or natural thieves, and our farms, in a great degree, have been left fenceless. It is impossible that the usual agricultural pursuits be resumed. Less than ten per cent., perhaps not more than five, of the usual breadth of wheat has

been sown. No oats nor potatoes, or very little of either, have been left for seed the present season; and it is the opinion of the undersigned that for the reasons aforementioned not more than (if, indeed, so much as) twenty per cent. of the usual crop will be planted. Our meadows and corn-fields have been made desolate by the tread of armies; homes have been rendered comfortless, until many of our citizens, tired of strife, and despairing of peace and comfort, are abandoning the country and seeking elsewhere that protection which they have failed to obtain in the land of their birth.

Against this tide of desolation we most respectfully and earnestly invoke the exercise of all the powers with which the President and Congress are invested. We cannot believe that the conduct of a people who have endured so much in behalf of the government will fail to command its attention. We do not approach the government as mendicants begging alms. By the sweat of our brows we had provided bread for another year, but that supply, as before stated, was given up to the Union army. For the want of that supply our people are now suffering, and for it they have, in the main, received no equivalent. The necessities of our army, and often the wants of the soldiers, have been so great that a large portion of the stock and provisions taken were taken by unauthorized persons, who, of course, gave no receipts or vouchers. Hundreds of families, heretofore blessed with an abundance of all the necessaries and many of the comforts of life, have been reduced to almost absolute beggary because of the privations imposed by the army. Many of these families are without money with which to replace the supplies, and had they the money, the supplies could not be found. Besides, it is too often the case that the receipts and vouchers given are irregular and informal, and such as no quartermaster will honor.

The first remedy which the undersigned would respectfully suggest is a more speedy and prompt payment of the claims due to loyal citizens for property destroyed and supplies furnished; especially that some provision be immediately made for the ready adjustment and payment of these irregular claims, to which reference has been made. During the siege of Knoxville, for instance, the houses of many Union men were burned by order of the commanding general, yet the families of these men, houseless and homeless though they be, can obtain no satisfaction from the government for the alleged want of authority in the quartermasters to pay such claims. The same may be said of irregular claims from all parts of East Tennessee. We would, therefore, most respectfully beg your excellency to direct the issuance of such orders, on the part of any department of government having jurisdiction thereof, or to recommend the passage of such a law on the part of Congress, as will secure the speedy payment of all such claims as those before mentioned. The prompt payment to the people of East Tennessee of the claims in their hands, and due, would do much to relieve their present wants.

The second, and, at the present time, the most important question that we would call to your excellency's attention is that of transportation. Had we money without limit, it would avail but little toward relieving the present wants of our people, for the purchase of supplies would profit us nothing unless we were supplied with the means of transportation.

To bring supplies across the Cumberland mountains by wagons, or pack trains, even had we the facilities, would be next to impossible. The experience of the army is sufficient to demonstrate the impracticability of supplying a population of more than three hundred thousand by that means. The navigation of the Tennessee river is permanently obstructed by the Muscle shoals, which are not passable by boats of the lightest draught, except during extreme tides, and by this route we have no hope of relief. Nashville is now, and for some time to come must necessarily be, the depot of supplies upon which the immense armies operating in lower East Tennessee and Georgia must depend. The demands of this force will necessarily, to a great extent, exclude the

citizens from the privilege of transportation. True, by means of the two railroads from Nashville—the one tapping the Tennessee at Decatur and the other at Bridgeport—supplies might be transported to the river; but then we have no boats at our command, and even had we the boats, the Upper Tennessee, the Holston, the Clinch and French Broad rivers, are unreliable for navigation, and, indeed, are unnavigable for six months in the year. Besides, the route from Nashville to East Tennessee, by way of the river, is, to a considerable extent, parallel with the enemy's lines, and therefore subject to the repeated raids of guerillas, whose daring is never so much stimulated as by the prospect of food and raiment. While much might and should be accomplished by this route to alleviate the present wants of our people, the undersigned are fully convinced that in view of the necessities of the army, sufficient facilities of transportation cannot be obtained to obtain anything like reliable or permanent relief to the citizens of East Tennessee. Still, we trust the government will grant every possible privilege to our citizens, and extend to them every reasonable facility for the shipment by this route of necessary supplies.

We beg your excellency to bear in mind that our wants are not merely temporary, and that they will not cease with the advance of the army. From the want of seed, the great diminution of labor, and other causes above stated, our next crop will be far lighter than any preceding one. From our exhausted pockets our farms are again to be stocked before that plenty to which we have been accustomed again smiles upon us. While deeply impressed with a sense of present need, it is the future that most deeply concerns us. Under the most favorable circumstances or direction of events, it is impossible for our own people to obtain relief of their own resources before the harvest of 1865 has been gathered. Meanwhile they must seek a communication direct and sure with the markets of our more prosperous sister States. That communication can now only be obtained through a direct railroad connexion with Louisville and Cincinnati. The construction of such a railroad your excellency, as early as the fall of 1861, had the sagacity to recommend to Congress as a necessary military measure for the suppression of the rebellion, and had the recommendations of your excellency then been adopted, East Tennessee, teeming with abundance, would long since have dropped like a ripe apple into the possession of the government, instead of being finally captured at an expense of millions to the government, and in an exhausted condition. The Union army, upon its arrival, would not only have found plenty, but would have been still in close communication with the plenty of the north. The transportation, or rather the *means* of transportation, alone of the army of the Ohio, with the losses necessarily incident thereto, has cost the government not less than *five millions of dollars* since the army left its place of rendezvous in Kentucky. Less than that sum, even with fully compensated labor, would have constructed a railroad from Stanford, Kentucky, to this point, and the army of the Ohio would now have been within twenty hours', instead of twenty days', travel from its true base of supplies. That the immediate construction of this road is a military necessity is now apparent to every member of this army. The scanty ration of the soldier gives evidence of the fact, and the dying animals that fall and perish by the wayside fully attest it. For the want of such a communication, the army, by reason of the exhausted condition of the country, has been reduced to extraordinary straits, its energies have been well nigh paralyzed, and for some time past the chief problem has been that or self-support. With the opening of the road to Chattanooga, however, the condition of the army will be, in a measure, relieved; but we would respectfully suggest, that in order to facilitate military operations from this base, it will be necessary not only to *supply* the army, but to *accumulate* supplies from which to make future drafts. Impressed with these views, General Burnside, and his successor,

General Foster, have, we understand, both recommended the construction of the road above referred to, as a military measure. By way of Nashville and Chattanooga, from Cincinnati to Knoxville, the distance is about 550 miles, whilst, by the route proposed, the distance between the same points is less than 300 miles. The construction of this road could be effected in six months with the labor of the country emancipated by the war, and for the present needing discipline and employment. Already the roads projected by Louisville and Cincinnati have been extended in this direction something over 100 miles. Louisville, as we understand, is now engaged in extending her road from Lebanon to Stanford, and Cincinnati must necessarily push forward her line from Nicholasville to the same point, or lose the advantage, hitherto enjoyed, of the valuable trade of that productive region. The distance from Stanford to Knoxville, by the most feasible route, is about 150 miles. In her days of prosperity, East Tennessee, with an enterprise that was creditable to her people, undertook to fill up this link in one of the most important railway communications on the continent. Ten miles of the road, beginning at Knoxville, are already completed and in running order. Ten miles more are graded, the masonry complete, and the bridge across the Clinch river, twenty miles from Knoxville, is partially completed. One hundred and thirty miles will complete the connexion, and bring us within easy communication with Louisville and Cincinnati. The route has been surveyed by competent engineers, and found not only to be practicable, but comparatively free from the difficulties usually characteristic of mountain routes. It traverses one of the finest coal and iron regions on the globe. While its construction would relieve the army in this region, and that operating south of here, it would at the same time afford relief to, and in fact furnish the basis of the resettlement of, East Tennessee. It would stimulate enterprise and develop the rich mineral resources of the country through which it would pass. It would give to the cities of the north and west the trade of a country numbering 400,000 in population, irrevocably unite our destinies with theirs, appreciate the value of property along the line and at both extremes, create wealth by encouraging industry and building up manufactories, and establish a new bond of reunion through the social and commercial intercourse thus secured. These incidental advantages to the people of East Tennessee, we would respectfully suggest, would be but a grateful return to them for the countless losses they have sustained, and for the untold persecutions they have heroically endured for the sake of the Union; especially when it is considered that our people have never participated in the benefits of any of the liberal grants of public lands, made by Congress from time to time, to our sister western States, for educational and railroad purposes. If the purposes of the government can be facilitated and its necessities removed, and at the same time the wants of the people of East Tennessee relieved, we feel well assured that your excellency will find in the incidental results a new and stronger inducement to urge the speedy accomplishment of the work proposed.

We have thus, in compliance with our instructions, attempted briefly and plainly to make known to your excellency our present and probable future condition as a people, and to suggest the remedy which, in our opinion, seems best calculated to afford sure and permanent relief. We feel well assured that your excellency will not be insensible to our appeal, nor unmindful of the sufferings of a people in whose welfare your excellency has heretofore manifested so lively an interest. We rely, too, with confidence upon the liberality and wisdom of the representatives of a great and magnanimous people for such action on their part as may be consistent with their duties and conducive to the relief of our people.

Allow us, in conclusion, to congratulate your excellency upon the success already attained by the Union armies in breaking the power of the rebellion,

and to express the hope that, with the entire restoration of the national authority, our people everywhere may ere long be blessed with a return of that peace and prosperity which can be enjoyed only under the government of the United States.

We have the honor to be, very respectfully, your excellency's obedient servants,

WM. HEISKELL.
W. G. BROWNLOW.
JOHN BAXTER.
O. P. SEMPLE.
JOHN M. FLEMING.
THOMAS W. HUMES.

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